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"The Foreign Policy of England."

A SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

MR. COWEN, M.P.,

IN THE

TOWN HALL, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE,

ON

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MAP OF CENTRAL ASIA, 1880.

scription of Map see other side.

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for description of Map see other side.

CENTRAL ASIA.

No region on the earth's surface is commanding at the present time more attention among civilized communities than that which stretches eastward from the confines of Europe towards China and India. The north-eastern portion of the chart depicts the vast territory bounded on the west by the Ural River and the Caspian Sea, and known indifferently by the names of Middle or Central Asia, Turkestan, Tartary, Turan, and Turkmenia. The two great rivers of Central Asia are the Jaxartes or Syr Daria and the Oxus or Amu Daria. From the time that Alexander the Great led his armies across the Oxus down to the recent advance of Russia, of all the lands on the earth's surface Turkestan was the one most imperfectly represented on the map; and even now, to a great extent, rivers, mountains, and cities are to be traced only in vague outlines. The greater portion of Turkestan is one vast plain extending in a south-westerly direction from the limits of Siberia to the mountains bordering the plateau of Iran. At all times geographical knowledge has followed in the wake of the conquering host; and the Asiatic wars of Russia have done more to rescue from obscurity the northern part of Central Asia than did all previous researches. The southern portion—the country of the Tekke Turcomans, and the chief scene, for the moment, of the Russian operations—retains much of its ancient mystery, as there are no books or writings of trustworthy authority about that region. The shaded portion to the north indicates the enormous territories absorbed by Russia within the last quarter of a century, and the dotted lines mark the successive stages of her conquest. Between 1856 and 1863 the Czar's armies had made their own the wide-spreading region lying between the old Siberian frontier and the course of the Syr Daria. After seizing the country of the Kirghises, the conquest of Khokand was begun, and by 1863 the Syr Daria frontier was secured by a chain of fortresses, which were readily supplied with provisions and the necessaries of war by the steam vessels of the Aral fleet. From the year 1864 the operations against Khokand began to receive a greater development. In the summer of that year the commercial town of Turkestan and the surrounding country were taken possession of by the Russians, and by the middle of September Chemkend was in the hands of Chernyaev's army. In the summer of 1865 the rich and fertile Tashkend, with its commercial city and strong fortress, became Russian territory. After this Kokan and Samarcand, Taimur's ancient capital, fell in turn; and the conquest of Khiva, in 1873, brought Russia to the banks of the Amu Daria. The actual encroachments on the Turkomans began only in 1875, and up to that time the Tekkes and Akhals were almost unknown even to the Russians. The basis of the Russian operations against those tribes is in the newly-formed Trans-Caspian Government, and chiefly in the two military settlements on the Caspian—Tchikislar and Krasnavodsk—the latter situated to the north of the former at the mouth of the old Oxus Channel.

The map also gives an outline of Asia Minor, with the new and proposed routes to India. The passage by the Suez Canal takes us to India in seventeen days—an immense saving of time and money when compared with the long and weary route by the Cape. The projected Indo-European Railway along the valley of the Euphrates and the shores of the Persian Gulf would lessen by one-half the time now occupied in the journey to India by the way of the Suez Canal. This railway, it is said, would be of still greater value politically; for, in case of a Russian attack on India, we would be able to throw ourselves between her base of operations in the Caucasus and her point of objective in the direction of the new scientific frontier. Such a railway, too, would bring us in direct communication with some of the most fertile soil in world—that now lying waste in Syria and Mesopotamia, which, under her protectorate, might, like Eastern Europe and the United States, become granaries for England.

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MR. COWEN, M.P.,

ON

"The Foreign Policy of England."

At a Public Meeting held in the Town Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on Saturday, Jan. 31st, 1880.

Councillor H. W. NEWTON in the Chair.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—

I have rarely addressed a meeting with more misgivings than I do this one. My hesitation does not arise from any doubt I entertain as to the correctness of the statements I am about to make, of the strength of the argument I purpose sustaining, or of the soundness of the deductions I intend to draw. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) On all these points I am thoroughly persuaded in my own mind. My reluctance to speaking springs from the conviction I entertain that anything I can say will be valueless, and may be locally mischievous. ("No, no.") International problems of great intricacy and importance have come up for settlement since the last general election. Many of the issues started are old ones, some of them centuries old, but they were not then before the electors. The Liberals, as a body, have assumed towards them an altered attitude. They have abandoned, no doubt for reasons which appeared to them good, the historic policy of the country, if not the traditional principles of the party. There is necessarily difficulty in fixing with precision the position of a complex body in a state of change. But no injustice will, I think, be done to anyone by saying that many

Liberals, on foreign questions, have espoused in spirit, if not in substance, the doctrines which were held with such tenacity and expounded with such earnestness by that band of capable men who made the world their debtors by their labours for free trade. I have not been able to become a convert to this new faith. I am not, and never was, an adherent of what is popularly known as the "Manchester School." On this subject there is between myself and some of my friends a distinct divergency, which I have no desire either to minimise or ignore. I am in favour of an European and national, as against an insular and—I use the word in no offensive sense—a parochial policy. It may seem somewhat hard to dismiss a member because, in the course of a Parliament, he has not been able to change his creed. I recognise, however, the right of the constituency to demand uniformity of view from their representatives. I also feel that in my present position I am a source of embarrassment to many and of annoyance to some; and I have repeatedly expressed my willingness, and I do it again to-night, to solve all difficulties by quietly retiring. It has not been thought desirable that an election should take place in Newcastle at this time; and although my immediate retirement might meet with the approval of some, I understand that it would not meet with the general approval of the electors. Such being the case, in my judgment it would have been wise not to have re-opened troublesome topics, which may add possible irritation to honest difference by promoting a discussion that can be fruitful of no good results. I do not object, without further hearing, to be tried, condemned, and, if you decree it, dismissed. There is nothing that I have said on this question that I wish either to modify or retract. There is nothing that I have done which I regret. I may be mistaken; I am not infallible; but I believe that the course of policy I have supported has been the best for England and the best for liberty. (Cheers.) I fear my convictions are too strongly fixed to be

shaken. I am not either so sanguine or so egotistical as to suppose that anything I can say will turn my friends from the faith they have accepted with so much devotion. Apart from political considerations, party passions and personal predilections and prejudices have been imported into the controversy, and in some instances these have been intensified by religious animosities. It is hopeless to reason against such a combination of active and angry sentiments. But the blast that blows loudest is soon overblown; and having lodged an earnest protest in support of my opinions, I am willing to bend to the storm and wait for the sobering effects of experience and the modifying influence of time to wear out the asperity of the political jehad which is now being preached against doctrines that, to my mind, have the semblance at least of truth and justice to sustain them. (Cheers.) But if I am to speak I will do so frankly, without reservation or equivocation. In a country where unfortunately speech is so much controlled by, and so much based on, party interest, little favour is shown to the politician who ignores its consideration and ventures upon the dangerous practice of striving to be impartial. If he speak the unbiassed sentiments of his own mind he secures the opposition of his former supporters, the slanders of his atrabilarious opponents, and the sneers, if not the suspicions, of some of his associates. (Hear, hear.) But sincerity of utterance is the only channel of truth, and I believe that my fellow-townsmen will listen to declarations of opinion which may involve opposition, and possibly censure of some of them, if these declarations are untainted, as I trust in my case they will be, with either levity or ignorance. (Applause.) I cannot cite a new fact, and no one can adduce a new argument either for or against the policy that this country has recently pursued. The subject has been written about and spoken of so often, and at such length, that every argumentative thread is worn thin and bare. The literature on the interminable theme is a veritable kaleidoscope,

in which every form of thought, every shade of opinion, is presented in all shapes of attraction and repulsion. But if what I say is not new, it will only be in keeping with the speeches of more distinguished persons. We are not philosophers speculating upon what might be, nor philanthropists dilating upon what ought to be, nor poets chanting the dirge of a brilliant but buried past. We are matter-of-fact politicians, talking of the prosaic present. And politics, I fear, are too often controlled more by self-interest than by sentiment. We are not dealing with an ideal State. If we were, the fragmentary and composite Empire of Britain would not realise my Utopia. Greece, whose name has been for centuries a watchword upon earth, whose fame will never fade, from whose history mankind have derived inspiration and guidance, and which still rises upon our intellectual sight like a mountain-top gilded with sunshine, amidst the devastations of a flood—Greece, I say, rather than law-giving, conquering, imperial, splendid, but savage Rome, would be my model. (Cheers.) I would have a State in which every man is free, and where every man is fortified against superstition by education, and against oppression by arms; where the arts and graces of Athens, and the martial independence of Sparta, would commingle with the mercantile and industrial enterprise and the naval prowess of Britain; and in which, while influence and authority are won by intellectual strength and moral worth, a proud defiance could be bid to despotism's banded myriads. (Cheers.) But these are the dreams of the idealists. We belong to the real and the active, and not the imaginary world. We are to deal with things as they are, and not as we can sketch them in our fancy. We are the inheritors of a colonial empire, the most widespread, scattered, and extensive ever known. It reaches to every region, and has its feelers and its feeders in every corner of the globe. Some of these possessions came to us in a questionable shape, and by means that no one can justify,

and that I, at least, have no desire either to palliate or excuse. (Cheers.) But the present generation of Englishmen are guiltless of the crime attending their acquisition. Our colonies cover an area of three millions of square miles, and have a population of fourteen million persons following diverse pursuits, but all animated by one mind, aim, and tradition. In India we have a frontier of twelve thousand miles, an area of one-and-a-half million square miles, and 240,000,000 of people under our sway. Our insular position frees us from many of the dangers which surround Continental States, but our external empire makes us at the same time one of the most sensitive and assailable of nations. No serious movement can take place in any part of the earth without our feeling its influence. (Hear, hear.) No country ever occupied such a peculiar position as Britain and her daughter empires now hold. It is not egotism to say that, notwithstanding all our shortcomings, power so vast was never wielded with so sincere a desire to use it beneficially. Every tribe we touch acknowledges our supremacy, and looks to us either in conscious fear of weakness, or with brightening hope of participating in our elevation. (Cheers.) To secure the existence, to rivet the cohesion of this vast dominion, blest with one of the highest forms of freedom that the world has ever seen, to carry to distant countries and succeeding ages the loftiest form of civilisation, is our mission. (Cheers.) To abandon the opportunity of usefulness thus conferred, to throw aside the hope of securing equal rights and impartial freedom, to destroy the means of establishing a feeling of fraternity and consciousness of common, material interests amongst so many millions of our fellow-beings, would be a narrow, a niggardly, a short-sighted, and a selfish policy for a great nation to pursue. (Cheers.) If we left South Africa, what would be the result? There are 350,000 British born men and women—our own kith and kin—living there. Without some protection from the Home Govern-

ment, the homesteads they have erected by years of patient toil, the centres of civilisation and of commerce that they have created by their enterprise, would be endangered, if not destroyed. Their assailants would not be the natives of the soil, who are friendly and inoffensive, but savage invaders from the North, who are as much alien and aggressors as the English. (Hear, hear.) If we abandoned India, a like, but more disastrous result would ensue. The scores of different races and nations into which the population of that country is divided would fly at each other's throats. In the earliest encounters probably the fierce, courageous, unteachable, and intractable Mahomedans, who are forty millions strong, would re-assert their supremacy, but after years of internecine war and social disorder the country would eventually fall a prey to a foreign invader—possibly Russia. (Hear, hear.) The 8,000 miles of railway, the 18,000 miles of telegraph, the canals, and other creations of English capital, would be destroyed. The machinery for the administration of justice, and the protection of life and property, which England has created, and which has assured to the common people of India more security and greater personal freedom than they ever enjoyed under former rulers, would be upset. (Hear, hear.) This country would suffer equally with the Indian people; the £128,000,000 of Indian debt would have to be provided for; civil servants and officers whose careers would be destroyed would require their pensions, and compensation would possibly be demanded by traders who would be ruined by our change of policy. (Hear, hear, and applause.) India, England, and the world would all be injured. (Applause.) No Englishman could contemplate such a contingency with approval, or acquiesce in it with satisfaction. Now that we possess it, we are bound to protect and defend India—to hold it against any enemy as stoutly as we would hold Cornwall or Caithness. (Cheers.) England is not

so many square roods of land, but a nation whose people are united in love of soil and race, by mutual sympathy and tradition, by character and institutions. It is not a fortuitous concourse of individuals merely bound over to keep the peace towards each other, and, for the rest, following their own selfish objects, and crying outside their own cottage, counting-house, or country, let everything "take its course." Our country is something more than the mere workshop of the world, a manufactory for flashy clothing, and a market for cheap goods. We are pledged to each other as citizens of a great nationality, and by solidarity of life. We owe a duty to ourselves, to our families, and to our country, and also to our generation and to the future. We have grown great, not merely by the extent of our possessions and the fertility of our soil, but by the preservation of our liberties and the energy and enterprise of our people. The present generation is the outcome of centuries of effort. The history of England is woven and interwoven, laced and interlaced with the history of Europe and the world for a thousand years. Wherever liberty has struggled successfully, or wherever it has suffered in vain, there our sympathies have gone. (Cheers.) There is nothing in human affairs that can be foreign to us. Wealth almost beyond the dreams of avarice, territorial possessions, and education bring with them heavy responsibilities. Power, to the very last particle of it, is duty. Unto whom much is given, of him much will be required. As we have inherited so we have to transmit. No one can look slightingly on the results which rest upon our national resolves. But if ever a nation, drunk with the fumes of power and wealth, makes an apotheosis of gold and material pleasure, prefers riches to duty, comfort to courage, selfish enjoyment to heroic effort and sacrifice, it sinks in the respect of others, and loses the first and strongest incentive to human effort. (Cheers.) Great work demands great effort, and great effort is the life and soul both of individuals and nations. I contend,

therefore, for these two principles—the integrity of the empire, and the interest, the right, and the duty of England to play her part in the great battle of the world, as did our illustrious ancestors, the forerunners of European freedom. (Cheers.) Let me apply these principles to the recent controversies in the East and the action that has been taken by this country. India is one of our most distant, as it is one of our most important dependencies. We hold it more as conquerors than as colonists. There are urgent and obvious reasons why our communication with it should be rapid, easy, and expeditious. Nature, mechanical science, and commercial enterprise, have contributed to make the best route to it through the Isthmus which unites the continents of Asia and Africa. The Egyptians, the Phœnicians, and the Carthagenians, before the Christian era, travelled to India this way. In the middle ages the Danish and Venetian merchants went by the same road. The first envoy whom England ever sent to India also journeyed by this path—Bishop Sherborne, who was deputed by good King Alfred to undertake a mission to the people on the coast of Coromandel and Malabar. As before the Christian era, so to-day—the most direct route to the East is by the Isthmus of Suez and Asia Minor. The canal is the link which unites our Eastern and Western Empires. Through it we not only reach India but our dependencies in the Chinese Seas, our Australian colonies, the Mauritius, and the British settlements on the East Coast of Africa. It is the neck which connects the head with the extremities of our Empire. (Cheers.) It has been suggested that if we lost it we could resume our old road by the Cape of Good Hope. It is quite true that this could be done. It is equally true that we might return to pack-horses and stage wagons as a means of transit, but it is not likely that we shall do so; it would be contrary to the genius of civilization and the spirit of our times thus to recede. We have got the Canal, and in the

interests of ourselves and of the world we will hold it free for every one at all hazards. (Cheers.) If Russia were to obtain political supremacy on either side of the Bosphorus, she could stop the Canal or intercept our way to India by the Euphrates Valley. North of the Danube she is comparatively harmless; but with the Black Sea, the Sea of Marmora, and the Straits, she would have at her command a position unequalled in the world for commerce and for war. She could barricade the Dardanelles, and behind it she would have two island seas, which would be at one and the same time harbour, arsenal, dockyard, and naval station. She could there with security and ease equip and arm her ships, and train her sailors, and manœuvre her fleet. (Hear, hear.) In the numberless islands and roadsteads of the Archipelago she would have protection for conducting either offensive or defensive warfare, such as is to be found in no other part of the globe in equal space. This position is the key to Europe—one of its life arteries. (Hear, hear.) Its occupation by a conquering, ambitious, and despotic Power would be a danger to England, to Europe, and to liberty. (Cheers.) The aspirations of the Russian peasant are southward. He yearns to be clear of the Boreal regions of snow and solitude in which he is enveloped for the greater part of the year. As naturally as the sap rises in the vine, so naturally does the desire of the Russian rise to reach more genial regions, and to burst the political and frozen cerements which rob him of life and of development. It is only the force of the iron yoke that makes him a labourer. By choice and by taste he would be a wanderer, a boatman, a pedlar, or a travelling mechanic. (Hear, hear.) Russia is not a nation like France, or Italy, or Spain; it is not a dynastic aggregation of States like Austria; but it is a crushing and devouring political mechanism, which has annihilated full fifty distinct nationalities. It kills every spring of independence; it intercepts and has covered whole continents with

the melancholy monuments of nations. Poland, the Niobe of nations, whose gallant sons have been the knights-errants of liberty the world over, has been all but interred by her in Siberia. (Cheers.) Circassia, the cradle of the human race, whose people are the manliest and handsomest in the world, has been converted into a tomb. (Cheers.) And she is now seeking to engulph the desert steppes, the briny waters, and the shifting burning sands that lie between the Caucasus, the Caspian, and the Afghan Table Land. (Cheers.) The interest, the instinct, and, to some extent, the necessity, of the Russian people, urge them to seek "fresh fields and pastures new" away from their biting north winds, their icy frosts, their bleak and limitless plains. (Cheers.) The government, which is Asiatic rule, bastardized by German beauocracy, with appropriating frenzy has striven to annex territory in all directions; while the Emperors, animated by an ambition akin to that of "Macedonia's Madman and the Swede," have been dazzled by a dream of universal empire. To find a foothold for their power in the unrivalled natural resources which Turkey affords, has been their aim. The defeat of Russia in the Crimea modified for a time her external and internal policy. To soften the discontent created by the surrender of Sebastopol liberal legal changes were instituted, and a decree emancipating the serfs was promulgated. The benefits conferred by this instrument are more apparent than real. By it the peasants were relieved from some claims to the landlords, but they were charged with equivalent burdens for the national revenue; and the imperial functionary is often a harder taskmaster than the local lord of the soil. M. Walewski calculated that the emancipation of the serfs doubled the direct taxes of the empire. Repulsed in the south and west, Russia sought an outlet for her stream of conquest in Central Asia. Unnoticed, to a large extent unknown, she has, in that quarter of the globe during recent years, absorbed

a territory nearly equal in extent to Continental Europe, and she has now a bristling array of bayonets in threatening proximity to our Indian Empire. (Hear, hear.) Although popular feeling and historical recollection have always favoured a campaign for supplanting the crescent by the cross, there is a small but intelligent and influential party in Russia who are adverse to this tempting and treacherous cry of "To Constantinople!" They contend that if the seat of Government were removed from the banks of the cold and misty Neva to those of the brilliant Bosphorus, the Empire would perish through the effeminacy generated by residence in the sunny and seductive South. (Hear, hear.) Hardy Northmen would be replaced in the councils of the Czar by the intrigues of Greeks and Bulgars. This would lead to divisions in which the unwieldly dominions would be split in twain through the struggles for supremacy that would ensue between the genuine Slav and the idle mongrels that would flutter round the Court of the new Byzantium. This view has been maintained not only by authors like Gurowski, and by soldiers like Fadeof, but by many Russian Liberals. Three of the most remarkable men that the revolutions in the East sent into Western Europe were Bakunin, whom the Emperor Nicholas, after an interview with him, described as a "noble but dangerous madman;" Mr. Alexander Herzen, one of the most fascinating of men, who combined the philosophy of Germany, the politics of Republican France, and the practical good sense of Englishmen, with the native Russian character; and Mieroslowski, the brilliant and eloquent Polish leader. I have heard all of these gentlemen contend that Europe would not see for many years—probably not for generations—another effort made by Russia to obtain Constantinople. They held this opinion not because they all approved of it—Bakunin certainly did not—but their belief was that the German party in Russia had so realised the hopelessness of a struggle with the

Western Powers that they would not resume it. The nervous, hesitating, indolent, but kindly man who is now at the head of the Russian people, has always, until recently, been credited with a settled determination not to renew the enterprise that ended so disastrously for his father. The idea was general that India and China, rather than Turkey, would be threatened by Russian advance. I own that I largely shared that opinion. But events have shown that this was an error, and that the passion for accomplishing what the people of Russia believed to be their manifest destiny was not dead but only slumbered—the leopard had not changed his spots nor the Tartar his skin. (Laughter and cheers.) The first pronounced intimation of the retention of this old faith was seen in the course pursued by Russia during the Franco-German war. Immediately our friend and ally France was worsted in that disastrous conflict, the Czar intimated that he intended no longer to comply with the clauses of the Treaty of Paris that neutralised the Black Sea. He did not invite the other Powers of Europe who, along with himself, were parties to that treaty to meet and discuss the reasonableness of his request for an alteration, but, with autocratic pride and despotic imperiousness, he proclaimed his determination to look upon that portion of that treaty as null and void. He had observed it as long as France was in a position to unite with England for its maintenance, but when she was temporarily disabled, he seized the opportunity to break an engagement which he had solemnly entered upon. This was the first sign of the change, the effects of which Europe has just witnessed. Russia, in her attacks upon neighbouring States, follows an uniform and unvarying plan. She begins usually by professing an interest in their welfare. (Laughter.) At one time she is moved by sympathy for her brethren in bonds as if there were no person in bonds in Russia. At another time she is roused to fervour for her co-religionists, as if there were no

persons suffering for their religious opinions within her own borders. She knows how to lure adjoining rulers to destruction by encouraging them in every frivolous expense, every private vice, and every public iniquity, as she did Abdul Aziz and many an unfortunate Asiatic Khan. She can compass the destruction of popular liberty by jesuitical intrigue, as she did in Poland. She can engage in plots and conspiracies, as she did more recently in Bulgaria. Ignorance, ambition, corruption, are all made in turn to minister to her designs. The cupidity of Turkish pashas, who too often obtained their positions by bribery, and held them by oppression and extortion, and the hopeless confusion into which the ministers of the Sultan had allowed affairs to drift at Constantinople, formed a favourable field for the work of Russian emissaries. The stereotyped process was followed. There was first complaint, then suggestion, and then the inevitable conference, and the equally inevitable war. The Turkish people, both Mahomedan and Christian, suffered under solid and serious grievances. They had been oppressed and outraged by a system of administration that was outrageous and indefensible; but they sought redress of their grievances at the hands of their own rulers, and not from a foreign Power. This was shown by the stubborn resistance that was made to the advance of the Austrian troops into Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Hungarians are the truest friends the Turks had in Europe, and if they fought so stoutly to oppose their entrance to their provinces they would have fought with greater resolution against the admission of the troops of any other country. After the war the Russian diplomatists and generals succeeded in getting a band of trembling palace pachas around them at Adrianople, from whom they abstracted a treaty that unmasked their designs, and placed them in a broad and startling light before the world. If there had been any doubt before as to the aim Russia had in commencing the war, there could be none then. Before she started on the

campaign the Czar declared—first, that he did not intend to enter Constantinople; second, that he did not seek territorial acquisition; and third, that his sole object was to ensure the freedom of the oppressed nationalities. He kept the word of promise to the ear, but broke it to the hope. He did not enter Constantinople it is true, but he surrounded it, and his troops would have entered it, if the English fleet had not been in the Sea of Marmora, and the English soldiers within call at Malta. He broke the second engagement by annexing Bessarabia and the territory around Batoum, Ardahan, and Kars. By the Treaty of San Stefano he proposed the creation of what he euphemistically described as a "big Bulgaria," in other words, a huge Russian province was to be created, whose borders were to extend to the shores of the Ægean. If the treaty had remained as drawn by Russia, she would have had a port at Kavala in the south, she would have had another in the Adriatic at Antivari, and she would have been left in command of two-thirds of the shores of the Black Sea from Midia, twenty-five miles north of Constantinople, round to some miles beyond Batoum. There would have been left around Constantinople a few acres of ground, little more than half the size of the County of Durham; then the new Russian State, like a wedge, would intervene; and beyond that there would have been Macedonia, Albania, and the north-western provinces. Turkey, left without frontiers and without fortresses, would have fallen a ready and easy prey to Russia whenever she felt herself strong enough and Europe was indifferent enough to allow her to resume her crusade. By this treaty Russia not only took territory in Armenia and Bessarabia, but she proposed also to subject the entire Balkan peninsula to her authority. She kept her third engagement by ignoring the nationality of the Roumanian inhabitants of Bessarabia, separating them from a free and uniting them to a despotic State. She despised the religious and race leanings of the Maho-

medans near Batoum, and treated with contempt the nationality of Mahomedans living in the southern provinces of Turkey. She in this way either broke or evaded every engagement she made. To have allowed Russia to retain the position she projected for herself at San Stefano would have destroyed the balance of power in Europe, to have put the fate of Asia in her hand, and placed in her grasp the virtual dictatorship of two continents. The main purpose of international arrangement is to secure the freedom and safety of smaller States, and to enable them to live their own lives while surrounded by Powers which could annihilate them without such protection. The law of nations prevents grasping, greedy Governments crushing weaker ones. If it were not sustained, the marauders of the earth would be let loose to prey upon their poor and feeble neighbours. It is no childish dislike of Russia that leads me to contend for the maintenance of this law and this policy. National enmity is no sound or permanent ground of either duty or policy. It is the defence of England and of Europe, the assertion and maintenance of the principles of free government as against a despotism—England and the Western Powers representing the one and Russia the other—that leads me to resist the advance of the Muscovites to the Bosphorus. In what way has the recent policy of this country contributed to the defence of the Empire, the maintenance of the way to India, and the upholding of the authority of this country in the councils of Europe? Let us look fairly at the facts as they are, and not as they are painted by rival partisans. To the jaundiced eye everything is yellow. By the fortunes of war—a hypocritical war it is true, but still by the fortunes of war—Russia had Turkey at her mercy. She had fought and she had won. She did not occupy Constantinople, but she commanded it, and to the victors belong the spoil. It is true, as I have just explained, she made certain promises before commencing the conflict which she either evaded or broke. But that is not remarkable. It would have been more remarkable if she

had kept them. (Laughter.) The Treaty of San Stefano did not fully express her desires, but it did express the extent to which she believed she could with safety go in the presence of the indifference of other Powers, and the assumed incapacity and unwillingness of England to oppose her. The Treaty of Berlin did not fully express what this country wanted, but it did express the extent of the concessions that it was possible to obtain. A comparison of what was dictated by Russia at San Stefano, and what was accepted by her at Berlin, will show the measure of change made mainly at the instance of this country. The Russian troops have evacuated Turkish territory. This may appear a simple statement, but it is not unimportant. Every effort was made by her to retain possession of the provinces she had conquered. She strove to promote discord between the Mussulman and Christian inhabitants, hoping that that discord could be made a pretext for her remaining. Failing in that, she propounded the Jesuitical plan of a joint occupation of Eastern Roumelia by herself and other Powers. These schemes, however, were baffled; and there is now not a single Cossack trooper west of the Pruth. If the Treaty of San Stefano had stood as it was drawn, Turkey would not only have been dismembered but destroyed. She has now the opportunity of making a fresh start in national life. She can, if her rulers choose, rehabilitate herself in the estimation of Europe and of the world. There is little evidence as yet, I am bound to say, of this disposition. The incorrigible pashas who control her policy seem to have learned nothing and forgotten nothing by the cruel experience of the last three years. The Government is as rotten as the portals of the Porte are wormeaten. These men have most of the vices of both Eastern and Western peoples, and few of their virtues. These are persons high in the confidence of the Sultan who are as completely under the control of the enemies of their country as Faust was under the control of Mephistopheles. But though the Porte perishes Turkey will remain. The

Empire vanished, but France was left. (Cheers.) There is, and has been for years, an active and patriotic party in Turkey, who have been striving to adapt their institutions to Western modes of life and to European requirements. The simple programme of this party is the fusion of the various races in the peninsula into an united State, based upon the equality, religious and political, of all. Fuad Pasha and Ali Pasha laboured long and earnestly for these principles, and they are advocated with equal sincerity by Midhat and his supporters. Men of all creeds and all races will be placed on a common level. This programme has the support of Christians and Mahomedans alike. One of the most painful and regretable incidents of this controversy was the disparaging way in which the honest efforts of these Turkish reformers were spoken of by Liberal politicians in England. Whoever else cared to sneer at the Turkish Constitution, it certainly was no part of the duty of professed advocates of liberal government to take up their parable against it. It is certainly not impossible to conceive of the establishment of a Government in which both Mahomedans and Christians may be united, and the pernicious influence which now predominates at Constantinople be exorcised from Turkish political life. By the Treaty of San Stefano injustice would not only have been done to the Greeks, but that country would have been condemned to sustain an exhausting conflict for its bare existence. By the extension of a Slav State to the Ægean, Greece would have been denied development. With resources limited and population scanty, she would have been stripped of the elements of growth. She might have been an independent State truly, but so weak that she would have been unable to fulfil the purpose of her foundation. She has now the opportunity of working out her redemption—she is the nucleus, the preparatory agency for the enfranchisement of a Hellenic State. (Cheers.) Greece has a lofty mission to fulfil, and, despite present unfavourable signs, I

do not despair of seeing her accomplish it. (Cheers.) She is something more and better than when Byron mournfully described her as "Greece, but living Greece no more." She *does* live; she has sustained a soul almost "within the ribs of death." (Cheers.)

"The Spartan blood that in her veins yet throbs at freedom's call :—
Every stone of old Greece—had it not its hero-tale?
Where they fought, where they fell, 'twas on every hill and dale.
The dead are but the hero seed that will spring to life again."

(Applause.) By the Treaty of Berlin Greece gained but little, but at least she was not by it "cribbed, cabined, and confined" to the narrow limits of her too restricted territory. The idea of most European Liberals has been that Russian aggression could be stayed only by the creation of a belt of free States between the Danube and the Balkans. The different nationalities would be there grouped in distinct organizations, and, combined, they would be a more effective barrier to Muscovite progress than an effete and receding empire like Turkey. Many Liberals who agreed with this principle saw difficulties to its practical realisation. The inhabitants of this region are chiefly members of the Greek Church. The Czar is the head of that Church, and he holds them in a state of political as well as theological tutelage. Russia has often professed to assist at the birth of a new nation, but she has always managed to keep her thumb upon its throat, so that it could be destroyed if it became troublesome. (Cheers.) It was a common saying of the Russian troops in Bulgaria, "We have now got these Bulgar pigs, and we will drive them." Apart, however, from these speculative objections to the project of distinct nationalities—the oft-declared policy of the Czars—when the Emperor Nicholas proposed to Sir Hamilton Seymour that England and Russia should divide between them the possessions of the Sick Man, he said there were many points in his proposed scheme which he was willing to yield to the wishes of

England, but there was one point on which he would never yield. Whatever else he consented to, he would never consent to the establishment of a number of small and independent States on the Russian frontier. These would be, he said, nothing but nurseries in which a perpetual crop of Mazzinis and Kossuths would be raised; their opinions would penetrate into his dominions and endanger the necessary authority of his government. This was then the settled policy of Russia, and has been authoritatively expressed repeatedly since. Bulgaria, as created by the Treaty of San Stefano, would have been little more than a Russian Principality; but by the Treaty of Berlin the Bulgarian people had had afforded to them the opportunity of winning for themselves an independent national life. (Cheers.) Some few years ago the Bulgarians were held up in this country as models of Christian meekness. Recently they have been condemned with almost equal vigour, and their character has certainly developed some not very loveable attributes. They profess to be Christians, but they have scarcely acted upon the Christian principle of doing unto others as they would like to be done by. They complained loudly and justly of the oppression they suffered from the Turkish pashas; but now, when they have the power, they have manifested toward their Mussulman neighbours a more arbitrary and tyrannical spirit than these Mussulmans ever showed towards them. But I have no wish to judge them harshly. A nation that has for generations been sunk in ignorance and vice cannot be expected all at once to realize the enlightened magnanimity of philosophers. People who have been trampled on will remember it; those who have been injured will retaliate, and those who have been oppressed will not all at once forget. But the Bulgarians in time will take their place amongst the European family of nations, and shake off some of the oppressive characteristics that have recently distinguished them. (Cheers.) The most gratifying and encouraging intelligence that has come

from the East of Europe recently is that these independent States had realised their position. They have learned that Russia's interest in their behalf was certainly not disinterested. The Roumanians remember with bitterness that although they came to the assistance of their big neighbours when they were in sad straits before Plevna, their reward has been the loss of one of their most important provinces. (Cheers.) The entire tone of feeling throughout these regions is a determination on the part of these States to assert their independence and shake themselves clear of Russian influence and direction. But the most important event that has taken place in Turkey has been the occupation of Bosnia by Austria. This action cannot be justified on the grounds of national right or justice. I certainly have no wish to extenuate or defend it. (Cheers.) It is understood that the clause in the Treaty of Berlin, which assured these provinces to Austria, owed its authorship to Prince Bismarck and Count Andrassy. Germany contends that the Danube is a German stream—that as she controls its source so should she command its mouth. German colonists are planted along its banks, and their statesmen are unwilling to allow it to pass under the control of Russia. Austria objects to the creation of an independent Slav State on the west, as she has already on her eastern borders. For these dynastic and State reasons, the occupation, or rather the annexation, of these provinces by Austria has been assured. I am not justifying what has been done, and am dealing only with the facts as they are. The occupation of Bosnia by Austria renders the advance of Russia to Constantinople all but impossible. Both political and military reasons combine to prevent her achieving her designs on the great city of the East. The case may be put in a sentence. The design of Russia, as revealed by the Treaty of San Stefano, was to obtain a preponderating influence in the Balkan peninsula. The object of England was to prevent her doing this. The result is that Russia is now further from the Bosphorus, and less likely

to get there, than she has ever been; and this has been accomplished chiefly by the action taken by this country. It has been achieved, too, without the loss of a single English life, or without our setting a single regiment in line of battle. (Cheers.) Of all the strange things that I have heard during this controversy, the strangest is that Russia has achieved a victory, while England has sustained a defeat. We were told this in varying forms almost daily. I do not think anyone else in Europe says so except some English politicians. It is a fact beyond dispute, that the military and aggressive party in Russia are loudly proclaiming that the victories they won with so much difficulty in the field have been abstracted from them in the Council Chamber. They were dissatisfied with the mode in which the war was commenced and for some time conducted, but the advance of the troops to the neighbourhood of Constantinople consoled them for a season. The Treaty of San Stefano, objectionable as it was regarded by England, was considered by the active party in Russia as incomplete and unsatisfactory. Their complaints against it, however, were mollified by the assurance held out to them that it was only temporary. But when even that unsatisfactory treaty had to be subjected to the revision and alteration of the other European States at Berlin, their discontent assumed an active and threatening attitude. The promulgation of the Treaty of Berlin corresponds with the recommencement of a period of political assassinations and plots. This reveals popular discontent, while the marching and counter-marching of Russian troops, and the massing of such numbers on the German and Austrian frontiers, reveal the state of feeling which pervades the governing class. It is indisputable that, in the estimation of men familiar with Russian society, the Treaty of Berlin has shaken the system of government to its foundation; while the war which Englishmen are so fond of regarding as a triumph for Russia and a discomfiture for this country, is looked

upon by Russians as having entailed upon their country a harvest of discontent and disappointment. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) To balance the territorial advantages gained by other Powers, we have obtained a more assured position in the Levant. I will not enter into the rather pitiful squabble about Cyprus—whether that island is what the poets of the past have painted it, "the blest, the beautiful, the salubrious, the happy, the dream and the desire of man," or as it is drawn by partisan politicians in this country, a fever bed and charnel house. That it is advantageously situated for guarding the Suez Canal from any danger from the North, and that it affords a favourable starting point for advancing to the East through the Euphrates Valley, will scarcely be denied by anyone who has impartially examined the subject. Military and naval men maintain that it can be made not only a watch-tower but a depot for arms and a safe naval station. It is only twenty hours from Port Said, nine from Acre, and six from Beyrout. It is near enough to watch, and close enough to strike, if we required to strike, in defence of our road to the Red Sea and to the Persian Gulf. By the Anglo-Turkish Convention, England has taken upon herself heavy responsibilities. But if we had not effected that arrangement, the Sultan, like Shere Ali, despairing of help from England, would have thrown himself—reluctantly, no doubt, but still he would have thrown himself—into the arms of Russia; and whatever the result of such a bargain would have been to the people, the greedy pashas would have been secured in their pleasures and possessions. We had, therefore, either to accept the position or permit it to pass into the possession of a rival who, with such a leverage in the centre of two continents, could not only have imperilled our Empire in India, but our authority in Europe. We have often entered into treaties with other nations entailing equally onerous obligations. We are bound to defend Greece against Turkey; Portugal against Spain; Belgium against France and Germany.

We were bound to defend Denmark, and with culpable cowardice we evaded the responsibility. (Cheers.) Under a stringent treaty we are bound to maintain the independence of Sweden and Norway. If Russia should attempt to lease the fisheries in Swedish waters or the pasturage on Norwegian soil, this country is to be informed of the fact, and any attempt on her part to infringe upon the Scandinavian territory we are under engagement to resist by force of arms. We are parties to other treaties, many of them quite as risky as the one we have recently entered into with Turkey; and few of them offer such prospect of achieving such beneficial results as may spring from the Anglo-Turkish Convention. In Asia Minor there are 700,000 square miles of some of the finest land in the world, washed by three seas, watered by large rivers, and possessing spacious ports and harbours. The soil is capable of producing grain, fruit, and cotton in abundance, while the hills and the valleys abound in copper, lead, iron, and silver. Much of this fair and fruitful region on which the seasons have lavished all their beauty, and nature all its fragrance, is given over to malaria and to wild beasts—is the gathering ground of predatory Kurds, and the camping place of wandering Arabs. The spot from which the first enterprise of man started—the land around which such a wealth of the romance, the poetry, and the mystery fastens, which has influenced the destinies and formed the characters of not one, but many peoples—is now, from causes partly local and partly foreign, doomed to endure a system of rule which is little less than organised anarchy. We send our surplus population across the Atlantic or to the Antipodes. There is no reason why they should not find a field for their labours, and an outlet for their skill, in a luxuriant land, rich with golden grain and an infinite variety of plants and fruit, and minerals, within a few hours of our own shores. (Cheers.) What has hitherto been wanted is security for life and property. Under the protection that might

be, that ought to be, and I trust will be, given by this treaty, these obstacles to colonisation would be removed. English capitalists and the English Government have always refused seriously to consider the project of a railway through the Euphrates Valley, because they declined to risk such large investments in a country over which they had not sufficient control. This treaty ought to, and I think will, dispense with this difficulty. The railway scheme is described by partisans as utopian and visionary, but that is a kind of opposition which has grown stale and obsolete. It is not many years ago since the construction of the Suez Canal was, with the approval of English engineers, demonstrated by our townsman, Mr. Robert Stephenson, to be an impossibility, and it was laughed at in the House of Commons by Lord Palmerston as the dream of a crack-brained Frenchman. But the canal is, nevertheless, a great fact. Last year there passed through it between sixteen and seventeen hundred ships with a tonnage of nearly three million tons, and thirteen hundred out of the sixteen were English vessels—a proof of the importance of this water-way to this country. (Cheers.) When the scheme of making a railway across the American continent was first promulgated, it was met with characteristic derision, and yet now the line between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, a distance of nearly 2,800 miles, carries thousands of people in the course of a year. (Cheers.) Russians in these matters are somewhat bolder and more enterprising than some Englishmen are. By the combined effect of river and railway, canal and lake, they have nearly united the basins of the Baltic, the Black Sea, and the Caspian. They have revived the old project of diverting the course of the Oxus, and by their system of land and water carriage, commencing at Riga and Warsaw, and terminating not far from our Indian frontier, they hope to secure a preponderating influence in Central Asia. The Euphrates Valley Railway would be 1,200 miles

long, and the cost of its construction is estimated at £12,000,000 —a comparatively small sum when the amounts invested in railways in this country are considered. I know no more of the future than a prophet, but I think it would be no great venture to hazard the prediction that the railway will be made, and made, too, through English enterprise; that this work will not only act as a breakwater against Northern aggression, and a bulwark for the Indian Empire, but will be made the fulcrum for raising politically and socially an unfortunate people, and making the early seat of arts and refinement, the theatre of some of the most momentous events in history, once more bloom and blossom as the rose. (Loud cheers.) My contention, in a sentence, is that our external empire should be maintained and defended, as much in the interests of freedom and civilisation as in the interests of England and its distant dependencies; that we cannot honourably and without danger shrink from the responsibilities that our history and our position as the oldest, and one of the chief of free States in the world, entail upon us; that the security of our dominions in the East and the equilibrium of Europe were threatened by the advance of Russia on Constantinople; that the action this country took, although it was open to objection in its details, was necessary, and in the main judicious; that it largely contributed to thwart the dangerous, the aggressive designs of Russia; has protected our present, and made provision for our obtaining an improved way to India, may help to secure better government for Turkey; and has strengthened the influence of England in the councils of Europe. (Cheers.) It is impossible now to discuss at length the policy pursued in Afghanistan, but I wish to express shortly the views I entertain on the action that has been taken in that country. Our Indian possessions are encircled by the ocean on the south, the south-east, and south-west. On the east they are protected by high ranges of mountains and all but impenetrable forests. These

mountains and these forests are occupied by savage tribes, who, although capable of great annoyance, as the Nagas are now, are incapable of inflicting any real political or military injury upon us. On the north and north-west our frontiers are the bases of the Himalaya and the Sulieman Mountains. It is an accepted canon in military science, that a Power which holds the mountains and possesses what in soldiers' parlance is called the "issues of the frontier," has an enormous advantage over the Power which occupies the plains. This is an opinion which will scarcely be contested. These mountains are peopled by fierce, warlike, and turbulent tribes, who have no special love for England, but have just as much dislike to each other. They live partly by pasturage, partly by plunder. They fight for their own hand. The only State that has an organised Government of any strength is Afghanistan. As long as these passes and mountains, and the country generally, were occupied by tribes of this character, no danger to India was to be anticipated. Partly brigands, partly soldiers, they could annoy us, and levy blackmail on the adjoining inhabitants, yet they could not seriously disturb or threaten our authority. But it is the accepted opinion of men of all parties—statesmen and soldiers alike—that should this strong military position ever pass into channels of a powerful Government, our exposed frontier would lay us open to serious danger. For years Afghanistan, if not friendly, has at least been neutral; and there was an understanding between Russia and England that that country should be considered as outside of their mutual interest and influence—that it should be regarded as a neutral territory, both being concerned in upholding its independence and neutrality. The advance of Russia, however, to the East so alarmed the late Ameer that he urged, some years ago, the English Government to enter into closer alliance with him than then existed. (Cheers.) He pointed out that Russia was advancing, and did not conceal his fear that, unless

he were protected by England, the same fate would overtake him that had overtaken many another Asiatic ruler. Our Government at that time did not share Shere Ali's fears, and refused to comply with the requests that he preferred. He became discontented; and from having a friendly leaning towards England, he now began to lean towards Russia, and to open negotiations with the Russian commanders in the adjacent provinces. When Russia's objects in Turkey were thwarted by this country, she retaliated by striving to set our Indian frontiers in a blaze. No one can complain of her doing so; it is what we would have done, probably, in like circumstances. She objected to our fleet being in the Sea of Marmora, and she thought she would disturb us and distract our attention by assuming a threatening attitude in Afghanistan. A Russian mission was sent. It was received with ostentatious displays of sympathy by the Ameer, and, as far as he was able, he proclaimed that in future he would be the firm friend and ally of Russia, and if not the enemy, at least not the friend, of this country. If not in words, the substance of his declaration and his action at the reception of the Russian mission amounted to this. Our Government required that, as he had received a mission from Russia, he should also accept one from England. He refused to do it, and we attempted to force the mission upon him. It is unnecessary to repeat the facts which are in the recollection, no doubt, of all present. Shere Ali's refusal led to war, and after a small show of resistance he fled from Cabul, and shortly afterwards died. With his son, who was made his successor, we concluded peace, and entered into a treaty. By that treaty England got the right of sending agents to certain specified districts in Afghanistan, and also obtained an important frontier. Instead of having the base of the mountains as a border, we had the mountains themselves. By that treaty the country should stand. (Cheers.) The frontier secured to us by it should be maintained. A most lamentable, melancholy, and disastrous

incident occurred in the autumn—the murder of Sir Louis Cavagnari and his suite. But that ought not to divert us from the settled policy that was developed and expressed by the Treaty of Gandamuk. I am in favour of holding the possessions that we have, but we want no more. We have provinces plenty and to spare. Even if we possessed Afghanistan, it would be only a perplexing acquisition; but supposing it were a profitable one, it would be contrary to the wishes and feelings of the Afghans to come under British rule, and I am altogether opposed to enforcing it upon them. (Cheers.) The Treaty that Yakoob Khan entered into embodies the policy of the country, and it should be upheld. (Cheers.) I have discussed principles and not personalities. I am not interested either in defending or in decrying any body of men. All I have been concerned for is to state the grounds on which I have been led to support the assertion of what I believe to be Liberal principles and the maintenance of a national policy. (Cheers.) It is easy to find fault, and easier still to impute bad motives to your opponents.

> "A man must serve his time to every trade
> Save censure. Critics all are ready made."

The shortcomings of the Government are as apparent to me as to the fiercest opponents of their foreign policy. They have often been weak, sometimes vacillating, not unfrequently wrong; but I wish to judge them as I would like them to judge me, or the party with which I am identified, under like circumstances. They have been beset by a succession of difficulties and dangers such as never before encompassed an Administration in our times. Apart from the inherent intricacies of the questions they have had to deal with, they have had to contend with the rival interests of other powers, a strong opposition at home, and some divisions in their own party. It is not generosity, it is simply justice, to remember this. We should also recollect that, in

dealing with foreign affairs, there are always some matters that cannot be explained. All Ministries are called upon at times to act upon information that they cannot make public.

> "What's done we partly may compute,
> But know not what's resisted."

It is possible, even in party warfare, to drive your attacks too far. Unqualified denunciation usually provokes reaction. The Government, which has had the support of large majorities in both Houses of Parliament, is accused of not only being wrong, but of being criminal—not only of being mischievous and mistaken, but of being malevolent and malicious. They are charged with having roamed round the world with incendiary designs, bent upon turning our frontiers into blazing bastions fringed with fire. The accusation is, in my judgment, not only incorrect but foolish. The indictment I would prefer against them would be of the very opposite character. I think they have acted with tameness and timidity. They have been six years in office, and the first half of that time presented them in their normal and natural character. An entire absence of political legislation, some mild but useful social measures, a free and easy administration were their characteristics. Taking warning by their predecessors, their great effort was to avoid needlessly offending anyone. Events that they could not foresee, circumstances which they could not control, have driven them into warlike action. People are easily misled by a cry, but no man who has examined the facts for himself can contend that the English Government started the conflict in Eastern Europe. Whoever began it—whether it was the Russian emissaries or the Turkish people themselves—certainly Lord Derby, who was then the Foreign Minister of this country, did not do so. He pressed the Sultan to settle the dispute with his subjects, and if that could not be done, he urged him, with somewhat cynical in-

difference, to suppress the insurrection. When that failed, he strove to localize the war. It might be said that England should have obeyed the three Emperors, and signed the ukase which the imperial league issued from Berlin, and if Turkey refused to comply with their demands she should have been coerced —in other words, that we should have gone to war against her. It is a matter of opinion, but, in the judgment of men familiar with the East, had such a course been pursued, the Turks would have turned their backs to the wall, and with all the disciplined fanaticism of their race, they would have fought against Christian and coalesced Europe for their country and their faith. The resistance that was given in Bosnia to the advance of a friendly Hungarian army strengthens this view. But if the Berlin Memorandum was refused, England assented and took part in the Conference of Constantinople. However we may condemn the course taken by the Government on the Eastern difficulties, no man can fairly say that they caused them. The Afghan war, for which they are more directly responsible, was the outcome of the action of Russia in Turkey. We may fairly criticise the policy of the Government, but no one, I think, can say that they sought a cause of quarrel. I do not contend that foreign politics are outside the domain of popular and Parliamentary criticism. On the contrary, I regret that for many years the English people have given so little and such fluctuating heed to foreign questions. But I do say that such delicate topics should not be made the battle field of party. There are two modes of conducting a discussion—one to elicit information, to sustain, to direct and guide the Executive; another to win a party victory out of Government troubles. If the Government of the country is in difficulties abroad, the nation is in difficulties, and it grates as much against my national pride as against my sense of justice to go hunting for arguments against my political opponents amongst the stiffening corpses of

your fellow-countrymen. (Cheers.) On this subject I will quote the opinion of the late M. Thiers, when discussing the attitude taken in France by the Orleanists and the Legitimists during the Crimean War. The veteran French statesman, speaking to Mr. Nassau Senior, said :—

"The rules of party warfare allow me to call my opponent a villain, though I know him to be honest; to abuse his measures though I know them to be useful; to attack his arguments with sophistry and even with falsehood; all this my opponent may do to me, and therefore it is fair that I should do it to him. But we must both of us abstain from using as our battle-field the foreign relations of our country. In these relations an error may be fatal. We may quarrel amongst ourselves; we must be united against the foreigner."

(Hear, hear, and cheers.) I am not insensible to the benefits of party government. English liberty, in a large measure, owes its stability to such organisation. Successes won by serious and prolonged struggles have been retained by party vigilance. The education gained in such struggles has made the victories permanent. It would be difficult, too, to replace a system that has become so acclimatised to our constitutional life. But party spirit, pushed too far, crushes individuality of thought and cripples independent energy. It impairs the disciplinary value of the suffrage by destroying the voter's sense of responsibility. It lowers the character of the Parliament by converting independent representatives into political automatons, whose value consists in the unreflecting vigour with which they shout the party shibboleth. On points of procedure and of detail, a member may obey the party managers without injury or disadvantage; but when great national issues are at stake, a man forfeits his own respect, and becomes a recreant to his country who ignores his convictions, and submits to think by deputy or to act by order. (Cheers.) Some of our friends, I think, act somewhat inconsistently on this subject. One of their chief causes of complaint against the present Parliament is its want of independence. They charge it

with being an unthinking party machine, and they applauded the action of Lord Derby and Lord Carnarvon when they separated themselves from their colleagues and announced their dissent from their policy. But when Liberals on the other side, acting from equally high motives, separate themselves from their leaders, they are censured, and in some instances, ostracised. What is accounted as commendable independence on the one side, is condemned as an exhibition of fractious self-will on the other. (Cheers.) There are in the House of Commons some thirty or forty members who, more or less, had supported the policy the Government had pursued on foreign questions. But their numbers possibly would have been larger if vote by ballot had been in operation in the House. (Laughter, hear, hear, and cheers.) Their action, however, in this Parliament is only in keeping with the action of other sections of the Liberal party in previous Parliaments. In the last Parliament the Nonconformists and Radicals were dissatisfied with the way the Government dealt with elementary education. The Irish members were discontented with the manner in which they dealt with university education. The hostility of the Irish representatives to the Irish University scheme of the Ministry led to their defeat in Parliament. The opposition of Nonconformists did not cause the defeat, but it certainly contributed to it at the poll. Yet the Ministers who were responsible for this educational legislation are to-day amongst the trusted leaders of the party. In the Parliament before that, stronger differences were developed. Lord Russell introduced a Reform Bill, proposing to give a vote to every man who lived in a house of the value of £7. This moderate proposal was objected to by a section of Liberals, who denounced it as revolutionary. Their opposition led to the defeat of Earl Russell's Government, and the subsequent resignation of his Government. Lord Russell himself describes this party as consisting of three gangs—the timid, the selfish, and those who were both timid and selfish.

(A laugh.) For the first, he said, he had pity; for the second indignation; for the third contempt. During all his long career, he declared that he never encountered a body of politicians so little influenced by principle or animated by a patriotic spirit. The leader of the party he described as a man "sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit." (Laughter.) Yet this same leader was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the last Ministry, and is now one of the ablest of the Liberal leaders in the House of Commons. Another difference took place in the same Parliament which had more beneficial results. The Conservative Government proposed that household suffrage should be made the basis of the Reform Bill. This was objected to by the official Liberals of the day, who wished to have a ratepaying franchise instead of a household. A number of Radicals met in the tea-room of the Parliament House declared that they approved of the principle of the Government Bill, and resolved that if the Ministry would give them an assurance that they would stand by that principal they (the Radicals) would support them. The Ministry *did* give the assurance, the Radicals *did* stand to the arrangement; and the result was that household suffrage became the law notwithstanding the opposition of the official Liberals of the time. The Adullamite defection drove the Liberal Government from office, and the tea-room defection succeeded in making a household suffrage the law of the land. There has never been a Parliament since the Reform Bill where instances of the kind have not occurred. The policy on foreign questions that I and others in the House of Commons have defended is the old policy of this country. I have no wish to shelter myself hehind big names or to shake myself clear of the slightest responsibility. I have too often been in a minority to be afraid of being in that position again. (Laughter and cheers.) I know what it is to be in the right with two or three. (Loud cheers.) But the policy I have expounded to-night and which I have supported in Parliament,

is the policy that was advocated by Mackintosh and Brougham, Horner and Lord Durham; it is a policy that received the approval of the philosophic Liberals, Molesworth, Mill, Grote, and Buller. It is the old Radical policy that was expounded by Major Cartwright, Lord Dundonald, William Cobbett, and General Thompson; and it was the common faith of Radicals when I first became interested in political affairs. It is not the faith, I know, of the Manchester School; but it is certainly, of the early Radicals. I would quote from the speeches and writings of the men whose names I have cited numerous extracts to confirm my statement; but I will content myself with citing, in support of my position, a few words from a statesman whose name will, in every Liberal assembly, be received with favour. Earl Russell for over fifty years played a leading and important part in the history of this country. No one has rendered the Liberal cause more effective service than he has done. He has not boxed the political compass and served all sides in turn. He ended as he began—a moderate and consistent advocate of Liberal principles. In his last work Lord Russell expressed the strong regret he felt at having retired, as he did, from the leadership after the defeat of the party in 1867. The reason why he regretted having retired was the policy the party was led to pursue on foreign matters. The policy that the present opposition has supported is the policy of the late Government. Lord Russell commenced their domestic legislation, but censured in very strong and very emphatic terms their action in foreign matters. These are his words—

I had no reason to suppose, when I surrendered the leadership of the party, that he (the Liberal Prime Minister) was less attached than I was to the national honour, less proud than I was of the achievements of our nation by sea and land, that he disliked the extension of our colonies, and that the measures he promoted would tend to reduce the great and glorious empire of which he was put in charge to a manufactory of cotton and cloth, and a

market for cheap goods, that the army and navy would be reduced by paltry savings to a standard of weakness and inefficiency. By his foreign policy he has tarnished the national honour, injured the national interests, and lowered the national character."

These are not my words. I never used language anything like so strong, but they are the words of the honoured and trusted leader of the Liberal party for the better part of half a century. I am not a conventional adherent of the fashionable Liberalism of the hour, but I am a life-long Radical by conviction, sympathy, training, and taste. (Cheers.) I am concerned for something more and higher than the transference of the offices of State from one set of men to another. I will not trim my political faith to catch the passing breeze, however pleasant. "Unplaced, unpensioned, no man's heir or slave," I neither look for nor care for the honours, the favours, or the patronising approval lisped "in liquid lines mellifluously bland" of any party. (Cheers.) Their is only one consolation for a public man, and that is the approval of his conscience and a sense of duty done. I will not knowingly or consciously offend any man by either word or speech, but if I am placed in a position where I must speak, I will speak what I believe to be the truth, temperately, kindly, but plainly. (Cheers.) Whatever my lot in life may be, whether I may be a member of the British Parliament again or not, I will labour for the advancement of Radical principles, and serve the Liberal cause according to my lights and to the best of my ability. But while I wear the party uniform I will never wear its plush. (Loud Cheers.) I will take any position, however humble, in the ranks, but it will be as a volunteer and not as a lackey. (Cheers.) With me the people's welfare is the supreme law, and our country's honour and safety the first consideration. But I prefer national interests to the triumph of a faction. I am weak enough to own that I believe in the now derided obligation of patriotism and the duty of the individual to the State, as one

of the first principles planted in the human breast. I know my country's defects, but I cannot join with those who exaggerate and parade them. The land of Michael Angelo and of Dante was not destitute of energy; but when she persistently proclaimed herself to be miserable and infamous through the mouth of Machiavelli, the world took her at her word and trod upon her. Englishmen disposed to decry their native land may remember with advantage the experience of Italy. It is ours to hand down to posterity, undimmed and undiminished, the priceless heritage of a free State, the imperceptible aggregations of centuries, won by the struggles of a heroic national life. It was planted, has been reared and watered by the sweat, the tears, the blood of some of the noblest of men. She has carried liberty and laws, art and thought, in triumph round the globe. If England is old she is not decrepid, and has still within her daring and elasticity. (Loud and enthusiastic cheers.)

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